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Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care

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Pastoral Care in Context: An Introduction to Pastoral Care

John Patton

Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993

288 pp. \$20.00

The author, John Patton, is Professor of Pastoral Theology, Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, and adjunct Professor of Pastoral Care, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta. He has written many books on this subject and on Counseling and is an associate Editor of "Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling". He is therefore an expert in the field of pastoral care.

If you like me have been absent from the classroom on Pastoral Care for some years you may want to catch up, and find out where the levels of today's teaching and training are, you may want to read this book. The author introduces us to the whole context of Pastoral Care today.

He identifies three paradigms of pastoral care:

1. The Classical: This is the one with which pastors who have been in the parish for some time are most familiar. The author underlines the necessity to preserve this and to reinterpret it for today. It is the message of a God who caringly creates human beings for relationship and who continues to care by *hearing and remembering* them. It is these two themes that are emphasized by the author.

2. The Clinical Pastoral Paradigm: The author suggests that the most important assumptions that are to be preserved in this one are: a. the way one cares for others is inescapably related to the way one cares for oneself, and b. pastoral caring always involves being someone as well as doing something, and c. one can best learn about oneself and how to care for others through experiential and reflective participation in caring relationships. This understanding is part of the tools of those who have taken CPE and have had the opportunity to work through this experience. Many of those who have been in the parish longer wonder at this new dimension; here is an opportunity to find out more about it.

3. The Communal Contextual Paradigm brings these two together, in the fact that it is based on the biblical traditions presentation of a God who cares and forms those who have been claimed as God's own into a community celebrating that care and extending it to others. Its newness is in the emphasis it places on the caring community and the various contexts for care rather than focusing on pastoral care as the work of the ordained pastor. In this context pastoral care is understood to be a ministry of a faith community which reminds members of God's scattered people that they are remembered.

Pastoral care today employs all these elements, and the book presents a rethinking of its message, person, and context, and calls for the carers to remember God's action for them, to remember who they are as God's people, and to hear and remember those to whom they minister.

I found this book very text-bookish, but that is what the author intended. I also found the second section very informing, for it is in this section that the author presents "Human Problems as Contexts for Care". It is here that he presents four of the major human problems to which pastoral care is addressed, and brings all three of the paradigms to reality in the cases cited.

The first part of the book brought me up to date with language and experience, while the second gave me some tools that I can use effectively in my work as a pastoral carer.

This was a good read!

Val Hennig

Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Waterloo

Ministry in an Oral Culture: Living with Will Rogers, Uncle Remus and Minnie Pearl

Tex Sample

Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994

ii + 100 pp.

Ministry in an Oral Culture is a book aimed at helping literate ministers trained in academia to do more effective ministry among the "traditionally oral" people of society. This is not a homiletics text with details on how to preach to an oral culture, although there are a few references to storytelling, illustrations, and the power of sound. As the title suggests, the book deals with many issues of pastoral ministry (socializing, solving conflict, managing change, etc.). Applying this material to preaching is really left to the reader's imagination.

The author describes 11 marks of a traditionally oral person. Some of these traits include: a preference for proverbs and storytelling, apprenticing and learning by doing, the preservation of community relationships, importance of tradition, and resistance to experts from the outside. As an advocate for oral people, Sample reminds us that they aren't illiterate, or less important; they simply experience life through a different lens. In fact, he estimates that one-half of the U.S.A. and two-thirds of the world are predominantly oral (p. 6). The popularity of rap and country music is an illustration of how dominant orality is in this culture (p. 11).

Sample generalizes that the majority of ministers are not trained to understand the oral culture, and that most are even prejudiced against these "common/vulgar" folk (p. 6). A church that is not sensitive to their ways will not attract them, keep them, or minister to them (p. 18). Throughout the book there are quotes and references as evidence that Sample has been informed and motivated by Walter Ong's *Orality And Literacy*.